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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR OES/IHA AND EUR/WE; HHS FOR NIH AND
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SUBJECT: MORE WORRYING OBESITY STATISTICS

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1. Reftel outlined Spain's Nutrition and Obesity Prevention Strategy (NAOS), which was launched in February with much fanfare by Health Minister Elena Salgado (responding to what she claimed was the nation's obesity "pandemic"). Minister Salgado went back on the anti-fat hustings April 26, when she announced that her Ministry's just-released "National Health Survey" had demonstrated that Spain's obesity problem remains grave and was getting worse. Below are some of the numbers flung out by the Minister to help get the NAOS up and running. The survey was conducted between April 2003 and March 2004 and all figures below (unless otherwise noted) are pegged to calendar year 2003.

-- 14 percent of Spanish adults are obese and 37 percent are overweight. The combined obese/overweight total is six percentage points higher than the 2001 total. Only seven percent of Spanish adults were considered obese in 1987, the first year in which the National Health Survey was conducted.

-- Nine percent of Spanish children between two and 17 are obese and 18 percent are overweight.

-- 55 percent of Spanish adults say they do not exercise at any time. This figure is five percentage points higher than in 2001.

-- 90 percent of Spanish adults eat dairy products on a daily basis (up from 82 percent in 2001).

-- 72 percent of Spanish adults eat meat three or more times a week (up from 62 percent in 2001).

-- 46 percent of Spanish adults eat fish three or more times a week (down from 48 percent in 2001).

-- 34 percent of Spanish adults and 45 percent of Spanish children eat "sweets" on a daily basis.

-- 69 percent of Spanish adults say they eat fresh fruit every day and 41 percent claim to eat both fresh fruit and fresh vegetables on a daily basis.

-- 57 percent of Spanish adults say they only eat fresh vegetables once or twice a week.

-- Six percent of Spanish youths between one and 24 do not eat or drink anything for breakfast. 19 percent say they only have something to drink for breakfast.

-- 89 percent of Spanish children between one and 15 watch television on a daily basis. 14 percent of these say they watch TV for less than one hour a day; 45 percent between one and two hours a day; 21 percent between two and three hours a day; and, nine percent over three hours a day.

2. COMMENT: Salgado used the above figures to make a familiar argument -- Spaniards need to adopt a more healthy diet and drag themselves away from the TV and to the gym. Spain has developed rapidly in the last two decades and with that development has come many of the ills that plague other "rich" developed societies. The Spanish government point person on NAOS, Food Safety Agency Director Doctor Maria P. Neira Gonzales believes Spain could learn from USG efforts to "fight fat" and is thus, with the assistance of Embassy Madrid, planning future travel to Washington to meet with officials from HHS and its affiliated agencies. Madrid Emboffs are already coordinating with HHS/OS/OGHA.
MANZANARES